Chapter: 3

Cultural Reconstruction and Subject Making
This chapter focuses on the nature of colonialism and its characteristics behavior in colonial India, which was conditioned by the imperial role founded on the myth of Britain's racial and cultural superiority and moulded by the colonial ethos. Generally colonialism can be defined as the total system of imperialist domination over a pre-capitalist country. Salem Stephen says: "It is by definition trans historical unspecific, and it is used in relation to a very different kind of cultural oppression and economic control." The rhetoric of power based on the destiny of the British as a governing race generated an imperial mystique that provided an image of the ideal ruler and offered him a role to play. The brave, daring and masculine Englishman — "the man who knew how to command." That was the heroic ideal to be projected before the savage and uncivilised native. Colonialism almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination and a suppression, often violent, of the heterogeneity of the subject in question. Colonialism being itself a cultural project of control its affirmation came through various process, including cultural technologies of rule in which English education was to become a firm tool. The word 'subject making' as used in this study means construction of a category of the colonised subservient to the British way of life or British policy. Education thus became an instrument of subject making.

The question of originality and its lack seems to haunt much of the work on colonialism and the postcolonial condition at the current juncture. The preoccupation with originality
and secondariness has of course a history, one that is frequently rehearsed. Its origin can be traced back to Macaulay’s notorious “Minutes on English Education” of 1835, that the learned Indian should be allowed to absorb English culture and that “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect” was to be created. In the politics of identifying ‘authentic’ natives, several strands of the word identification are at stake: e.g., how do we identify the native? how do we identify with it? how do we construct the native’s identity? what processes of identification are involved?

In many critical discourses, the image is implicitly the place where battles are fought and strategies of resistance negotiated. Frantz Fanon in his book titled *Black Skin, White Masks* writes on the conflictual economics of colonialism and racism: “For the black man there is only one destiny, and it is white”. Fanon, elaborating on the necessity of violence in the native’s formation, asks ‘What does the black man want?’ Homi K. Bhabha’s argument is that ‘the black man wants the objectifying confrontation with otherness’. He indicates that the criticism of the history of colonialism via the problematic of the natives identification can in fact lead to an understanding of the larger problems of otherness that do not necessarily emerge exclusively in anticolonial discourse. Rey Chow’s essay ‘Where Have All the Natives Gone?’ intervenes in one of the most heated discussions in contemporary post colonial theory: the ‘native’ as silent object or speaking subject. He writes, “it needs to be rethought as that which bears witness to its own demolition – in a form that is at once image and gaze, but gaze that exceeds the moment of colonization.” Chow insists on the commodification of the ‘native’ but attempts to steer a path between the ‘native’ and the native as ‘the site of authenticity and true knowledge’. She argues that the native is an ‘indifferent defiled image’. In the final analysis the British
construction of the native man and woman boils down to state of uni-genderarity composed of the following characteristics: the native man is physically weak and inactive, coward, extremely crooked and utterly dishonest, while the native woman is illiterate, a repository of superstitions, devoid of self-confidence and depended on men folk.

Edward Said, in his ‘Orientalism’, explored the political implications of the above colonial construct of the oriental society. Said stresses over the point that the urgency for a moral support for the continuation of the colonizer as induced to them to fabricate a view of the oriental society which they propagated as empirical truth. D. Maya finds these white men reaching across the barriers of culture to establish enduring relationships with Indians. This was made possible by an enrichment of mind achieved through eager curiosity to explore Indian culture, literature and religion. The position of Said is empirically supported by his random sampling of some important intellectual branches of British in India particularly in the assembling of data in the census reports, anthropological reports and district gazetteers. The British imperialists in India mainly represented a cross section of the British bureaucracy that formed the administrative machinery of the Raj in the post-mutiny era. But their observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to morals was derogatory. Charles Grant recorded his conviction that conquest has been made in Indian interest as “the means not merely of displaying a government unequalled in India, for administrative justice, kindness and moderation, not merely of increasing the security of the subjects and prosperity of the country, but of advancing social happiness, of a meliorating the moral state of man, and of extending a superior light”. The British historian James Mill avoided justifying conquest, but stressed the possibility of compensation for “the people of India, for the miseries of that misgovernment which they had so long endured”.
Kipling’s India, in *Kim*, has a quality of performance and inevitability that belongs not just to that wonderful novel but to British India, its history, administrators, and apologists and, no less important, to the India fought for by Indian nationalists as their country to be won back. By giving an account of this series of pressures and counter pressures in Kipling’s India, we understand the process of Imperialism itself as the great work of art engages them, and of later anti-imperialist resistance.\(^5\) *Kim* is as unique in Rudyard Kipling’s life and career as it is in English literature. It appeared in 1901, twelve years after Kipling had left India, the place of his birth and the country with which his name will always be associated. Rudyard Kipling’s importance in the definition, imagination, the formulation of what India was to the British empire in its mature phase, just before the whole edifice began to spilt and crack, is undeniable. *Kim* was written not just from the dominating viewpoint of a white man in a colonial possession but from the perspective of a massive colonial system whose economy, functioning, and history had acquired the status of a virtual fact of nature.\(^6\) Those works of literature whose manifest subject is empire, have an inherently untidy, even unwieldy aspect in so fraught, so densely charged a political setting. Every novelist and every critic or theorist of European novel notes its institutional character. Imperialism and myths of the White man’s superiority was propagated by writers like Kipling. He had generated a dream of empire and an illusion of sacrifice that provided the inspiration to come to India. From the Indian perspective, the imperialist role can only be described, as Benita Parry has aptly termed it, as an instance of “superb insolence”, blind “ethnocentricity” and “total egocentricity”.\(^7\) E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* is a masterpiece and it is laid in India about 1920 and it deals with tension between the natives and the British. The Britisher’s, as masters enjoyed life but their arrogance and contempt for the Indians had alienated them. The Britisher’s had a
deep conviction that they belonged to a superior race and must not mix with the Indians who were inferior to them. England is to be a ‘king’ of the globe, a sceptred isle, a source of light for all the world, its youth were to be colonists whose first aim was to advance the power of England. Ronny Heaslop, one of the characters of *A Passage to India* represents the young British official and he felt his main business in India was to maintain peace for the safety of the British Empire. He could sacrifice his own interests for the sake of the British rule. He was content to live like all other Englishmen scattered in different parts of the empire.

The application of those theories were amply projected in the case of Bengal where the British established themselves as the rulers and the process of westernization took place with complete political authority. The British had conducted the forces of cultural penetration in a very subtle and intelligent way. The British political officers while reflecting on the ways of the Indians in their writings, revealed their inimical attitude of contempt for an inferior and conquered people. The European views of the Bengalis, as cowards, physically weak and without any courage were almost unanimous. In a book writing in 1792 Charles Grants painted the Bengalis in the blackest colour dishonest and corrupt. This describe them as inferior to the most backward classes in Europe. Later in 1813 the Marquis of Hastings referred to the Bengalis as leading almost an animal life.

The historian Mill expressed a similar view in 1818 William Macaulay too drew a dark and dismal picture of the Bengalis in his own inimitable style. The Collector in the District Census Report of 1891 recorded the following remarks: the people of Rajshahi are steeped in lethargy, from which they cannot be awakened: owing to the fertility of the soil, the people of this district are not, so far as I can ascertain, driven to the necessity of seeking occupation elsewhere. He further says: they remain contented with their homes, even though their homes may be situated in a very hotbed of malaria.
country, as the British found, was divided into different races, sects and religions. Writing about the Mohammadans, W.Crooke in *Imperial Gazetteer of India* vol.1, the Hidayatis i.e. the progressive class and the Behadaytis i.e. the conservative class. So was the caste ridden Hindu society. The British regarded both the Hindus and Muslims as two separate communities having different cultures, traditions, religion, economic system, laws of inheritance etc. The European officials believed that all Indians were untrustworthy and criminals at heart. *A State Paper* written in 1772, run “[natives] are not, like the robbers in England, individuals driven to such desperate courses by sudden want. They are robbers by profession, and even by birth. They are formed into regular communities, and their families subsists by the spoils which they bring iOME to them”.22 E.M. Froster in his *A Passage to India* spoke of “a minor incident had ignited the spark of racialism”.23 Dr. Mouatt, the Director of Public Instructions, was reported to have said at a prize distribution meeting that ‘Indians were liars’.24 This incident was the theme of the editorial *The Statemans* entitled ‘Colonial Logic’ which published in 1876: The D.P.I was reported to have said that “if a single Englishman who can conscientiously affirm that he believed the native to be his equal, either morally, socially, physically, or, in fact, in any one way that it is possible for one man to the equal of another.” he is wrong for the native is inferior to the European in everything.25

The British viewed racial antagonism with different heritage and history, without desiring to understand the other. They conceived the native as “internally fragmented, heterogeneous, a mosaic of languages and ethnicities”.26 H. Risley’s *The People of India*, threw light on this aspect: “we must not forget that India is not yet a nation; we must not forget that it is a congeries of races, which are not always friendly to each other:}
we must not forget the ancient hate, the ancient clashing of caste and creeds which still hold India under their vice like grip.”

They further viewed that they have no common language. In 1911, 220 languages (including 38 minor dialects) spoken by 313 millions were recorded. Risley believed that “though the linguistic jealousies of Hindus and Muhamadans as to the script and vocabulary of the language will not readily be appeased.” The British claimed that the English language was to be the unifying force. Risley dreamed of future when English would “become the lingua franca of the three hundred millions who inhabit the Indian empire.”

The British were critical about native culture: it was not a unified one. The conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims and a constant lack of trust between these communities featured in a very prominent way in their writings. In the series of lectures published under the title, “The Expansion of England” Sir John Seeley spoke of religion as “the strongest and most important of the elements which go to constitute nationality”, but this was no so in India where religion divided people. His general proposition as to the influence of religion upon nationality seems to lose sight of the historical fact that while community of religion strengthens and consolidates national sentiment, religious differences create distinct types within a nation and tend to perpetuate separate and antagonistic interests. Another observation of Sir Henry Cotton, who points out that “it is impossible to be blind to the general character of the relations between Hindus and Muhamadans; to the jealously which exists and manifests itself so frequently, even under British rule, in local outbursts of popular fanaticism; and religions friction which occasionally accompanies the celebration of the Ram Lila or the Bakr Id or the Muharram.”
Cromer says, "Orientals were conceived by the west as 'subject races' and their government as the government of subject races". 11. Risley in his The People of India attempted to classify the races of India on the basis of anthropometry; the existing population represented a mixture of various races that had amalgamated within the historical period. 34 H. Conrad similarly used colonial accounts of 'lazy natives'. 35 Therefore, it is cohesiveness but fragmented in nature. The orient was almost totally ignorant of west. Their basic arguments was that oriental society was not a monolith and a mosaic of ethnic and cultural fragments.

III

Edward Said's splendidly written culture & Imperialism provides an analysis that 'all cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them'. 36 Because it requires the study of western knowledge or representations of the non-European world to a study of both those representations and the political power they express. For example, nineteenth centuries do not merely reproduce the outlying territories. Said wrote 'they work them out, or animate them, using narrative technique and historical and exploratory attitudes and positive ideas of the sort provided by thinkers ... these developed and accented the essentialist positions European culture proclaiming that Europeans should rule, non-European be ruled. And Europeans did rule'. 37 In the system of education designed for India, students were taught not only English literature but also the inherent superiority of the English race. Contributors to the emerging science of ethnographic observation, as described by George Stocking, carried with them scrupulous tools of analysis and also an array of images, notions, quasi-scientific concepts about barbarism, primitivism, and civilisation; in the nascent discipline of anthropology, Darwinism, Christianity, legal history, linguistics, and the lore of intrepid
travellers mingled in bewildering combination, none of which wavered, however, when it came to affirming the superlative values of white i.e., English civilisation.

The domination is not inert, but informs metropolitan cultures in many ways: 'the imperial motif woven into the structures of popular culture, fiction, and the rhetoric of history, philosophy, and geography. In a very important work *Masks of Conquest Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Gauri Viswanathan provides an analysis the system of British education in India, whose ideology derives from Macaulay and Bentinek, is seen to be permeated with ideas about unequal races and cultures that were transmitted in the classroom. They were part of the curriculum and pedagogy. It might even have been the condition of possibility for colonial domination. And denationalising, the tenor of which went to magnify British power and to lower and degrade Indian men and manners.

The historical writings of the 19th century by contemporary Englishmen e.g. James Mill's six volumes, Thronton's six volumes *History of the British Empire in India*, Beveridge's *Comprehensive History of India* (1867), Trotter's *History of the British Empire in India* (1866) as well as some advanced books written by Meadows Taylor (1870), Colonel G.B. Malleson (1890), Sir Alfred Lyall (1894), V.A. Smith (1919), P.E. Roberts (1921), and Thomson and Garratt (1934), were tinged by the spirit of imperialism which they inherited as a legacy from the British rule in India during the preceding century. V.A. Smith's *Oxford History of India* (1919) on a smaller scale, and *The Cambridge History of India*, Vols. V (1929) and VI (1932), furnish the most typical example of such historical work. As R.C. Majumder has pointed out, they were products of men who honestly believed in the doctrine 'my country, right or wrong', and used the medium of history to defend British imperialism which had by that time come in for a good deal of criticism both in
India and abroad. The Cambridge History of India, Vols V-VI, the last great historical work on modern India written by British historians, looks at India purely from the standpoint of British officials and statesmen. Its attention was mainly directed to, and its interest was primarily concerned with, the British dominion and British administration. While minute details are given on these points, the story of Indians, as such, is almost completely ignored.40 There was, besides, the over-powering sense of racial superiority which made even some eminent Englishmen, including Governors-General and British Cabinet Ministers look upon the Indians as little better than animals or primitive savages.41 It is therefore scarcely a matter of surprise that the British historians during British rule, would give a picture of Indian history, which suffered, to a very large degree, from distortion and suppression of truth, biased judgement, and wrong inference, wherever the British prestige was likely to be damaged by a narration of actual events. Some modern British historians of India, while have admitted the truth of this charge, Edward Thomson in his *The Other ... published in 1926 describe how the English with the pompous, cold blooded religiously of the Raj at its worst, saw Indians and their history as barbaric, uncivilized, inhuman.42 They describe British Indian history as the 'worst patch in current scholarship.'43

IV

The word 'mimicry' in the extract sense in which Homi K. Bhabha speaks of it. His work on the unstable economies of identity production in colonial discourse allows us a way of reading and that can throw into question the grounds of the entire imperial enterprise.44 The process of 'mimicry' became a part of the 'cultural subversion' of the colonized, with the acceptance of their education and culture. In the very process of its enunciation, Homi Bhabha spots what he calls 'ambivalence', 'hybridization' and 'mimicry'.45 He has
sought an entry into questions of originality and repetition through Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstruction. But where Fanon sees the command to mimic as a subjective death sentence, Bhabha plays with the deconstructive possibilities of that colonial stereotype. In their debates, Parama Roy remarks:

Even if one concedes (as I do not) that there is a more historically persuasive Fanon that exists apart from the one Bhabha gives us, it seems to me that critical work can proceed only through such violent "translations": what fascinates me more is something that Gates notes, albeit censoriously: Bhabha's obvious anguish and impatience with Fanon's "failures" to sustain "his most radical theoretical insights".

The position held by Parama Roy has a strong element of generality because it has been universalised by the 'mimicry' theory _Black Skin, White Mask_ of Fanon and later by a subtle refinement being brought into it by Homi K. Bhabha. For, Bhabha observes a double-edged effect of 'mimicry'. He theorizes 'colonial mimicry as the representation of a partial presence that disrupts the colonizers narcissism and subjects Englishmen to profound strain. Bhabha believes that ambivalence occurs at the site of colonial dominance. He writes "in the ambivalent world of 'not white / not quite' the founding objects of the Western world become the erratic, eccentric, accidental objets troves of the colonial discourse - the part-objects of presence".

In an almost identical combative refrain Franz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak Chakraborty, Homi K. Bhabha, Padmini Mungia, Gauri Viswanathan, etc., ploughed through the archaeology of colonial cultural subversiveness. The underpin behind the new spurt of anti colonial confabulation is that the colonizers' 'cultural' response or reaction to the 'culture' of the colonised has been held to be 'colonial construct':. The ambivalence that under grids the
procedure of colonial mimicry produces simultaneous and incommensurable effects, reestablishing English and Indian identities as part of the same operation. The model of identity formation proffered by the trope of the mimic man has been, it should be noted, subject to some friendly criticism. Feminists, while sympathetic to theorisations of colonial mimicry, have pointed to the gendered provenance of this figure and have noted Bhabha's silence about crucial feminist theorisations of mimicry. Benita Parry's arguments "the tropes of 'mimicry', 'sly civility', and 'hybridity' that Bhabha deploys to stage what he identifies as the ambivalence of colonial discourses are all derived from the colonial production of an educated class of natives". He notes that the nature of colonial discourse actively encourages the cloaking of subalternity and class identity, its aim being "to substitute metonymically educated colonial for the native as such". None of this, of course, is meant to suggest that the work currently available on colonial mimicry and identification disallows any engagement with questions of sexuality, gender, religion and class.

There were three different cultural markers by which the cerebral act called 'mimicry' can be distinguished. The 'White Nabob' is the myloneme of the first act of white 'mimicry' in India in which the whites in the initial phase of their India experience willfully subverted their culture by the imitation of the Indian cultural elitism. The second phase of white 'mimicry' is typified by Anthony Firinghi, Woodroof, etc., and in their modern incarnation through the ISKON movement. Richard Burton's mimicry being the third certainly came as a sequel to the Masks of Empire Conquest Literary Study and British Rule in India by Gauri Visvanathan. His espionage in colonial interest placed together cultural paradigm upon indegenosity and authenticity.
Bhabha's formulation of the inherent ambivalence of colonial discourse and its hybridized effects is traversed by related preoccupations and anxieties the necessity for impersonating the native or the fear of going native. Based on Richard Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madina and Meccah* (1855) as text Parama Roy argues that Burton seeks to resignify rather than imitate, native identity. so that the native, in order to have access to a subject position as a native, can only do so modeling himself after Burton. In 1843 Richard Burton was appointed regimental interpreter and was ordered, with the 18th Bombay Native Infantry, to Sind. Burton was to stay in Sind and serve under Sir Charles Naiper, who had been appointed governor of the Province, until 1849. Since he had by this time already qualified as an interpreter in Hindustani and Gujrati, he soon hired a Persian munshi teach him Persian, Arabic and Sindhi. By 1852, conceived of his pilgrimage to Mecca and he wrote an extraordinary two volume travel book, the *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madina and Meccah*. Now the subject of positions need to be foregrounded in a reading of Burton's work, and Homi K. Bhabha's work on the unstable economics of identity production in colonial discourse allows us a way of reading Burton's impersonations. Parama Roy admits, "Bhabha locates in mimicry the site of an ambivalence and uncertainty that can throw into question the grounds of the entire imperial enterprise. He draws our attention to the subversive or at least the destabilizing potential of the move that reproduces asymmetrical difference under the sign of assimilation/ sameness; the mimic man, the subject in process, functions as a supplementary instance that, far from (only) stabilizing the imperialist self, (also) interrupts its coherence through defamiliarization." Parama Roy tends to induce an adage to the theoretical posturing of Homi K. Bhabha on formulation of the inherent ambivalence of colonial discourse and its hybridized effects. Speaking about 'The theories of mimic formation' Bhabha says:
Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. \(^{58}\)

On the basis of the postcolonial discourse mentioned above I intend to situate the desire of the British for the reformative process. According to the western concept, pre colonial administrative structure namely economic, social, legal and educational etc. was desired to be reconstructed. Because the 'mimics' identified the British metropolitan culture with modernity and the indigenous one as traditional. The term of modernisation was not only confined to the social forum it was as well extended to administrative reforms. In this regard the elite (Roy Bhadur, Khan Bhadur etc.) who were fully influenced by the British metropolitan culture played important role to transform the indigenous culture of the state. At the same time they remained a bit selfish in the process of transformation. They segregated themselves as a separate class of their own and for the continuation of their identity they felt the presence of the British necessary. They helped the British to save their interest by ruling the country. Thus, the 'mimics' desired the continuation of the British domination and control in the state. They exceeded the bounds of Macaulay's puppet like 'class of interpreters'. The following chapters mainly emphasise the application of cultural project through education, as education is another major component of identity and representation.
Notes & References:


6. Chow, Rey 'Where Have All the Natives Gone?' in Padmini Mongia (edited) Ibid, p. 123.


And Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (London: Pluto, 1986).


52. Sarpe, Jenny Ibid. p. 139.


57. Roy Parama. Ibid. p.26